

XLI. Romans in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel of God
“Gospel Slaveship”
Romans 6:15–23
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Before we get into Romans 6:15-19 I want to remind you of the foundation of it in Romans 6:12-14. This is the Word of God, which is inspired, infallible, inerrant and eternal. Romans 6:12-14 says [12] *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. [13] Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. [14] For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

It's been four decades that I've had the privilege to serve Christ as a minister of the Gospel and that's a lot of Sunday mornings and Sunday nights. This has been a privilege for me in addition to Sunday mornings and Sunday night sermons I've had a couple of Bible studies every week and mentoring groups and that means I actually have the opportunity to do the deep dive into God's Word every week – 20 to 30 hours in a morning sermon, 14 to 16 hours in an evening, other hours for Bible studies. There are things that you begin to absorb when you get to immerse yourself into God's Word.

I have this pastoral desire, not only to preach God's Word faithfully and contextually, but also that you would grasp God's Word. One of the things that you begin to see is that the Scriptures are not put together haphazardly or serendipity. There's a clear architecture to God's Word, a clear design to God's Word and each writer of the Scripture has their own architecture. You can see it, feel it, and identify it and Paul stands out that way very clearly.

I'd like to share with you the Pauline architecture, because he's got 13 epistles and his writing kind of dominates the New Testament for us. As you read it, there are a number of things that you will always see in it constantly that I count as the architecture of His Word, but I just want to mention two of them that hopefully will help you as you get into God's Word personally, and as you get into God's Word to disciple someone, to teach someone.

Paul calls himself a master builder and when Paul is writing the Scripture, there's a clear architectural design that keeps coming up. I will use the building materials of his day - stones. When a building was built in the first century, in Israel, stones were the most used. There were certain stones that they called the foundation stones – pillar stones – that were so strong, so solid, so embedded that you could build the entire superstructure. In fact, you needed to build the superstructure on them. Paul is constantly giving you foundation stones. We've already encountered some, and we're going to encounter more in our study of Romans.

Romans is this Magnus opus of Paul's heart desire. His heart desire is to get to Rome, but he can't get there so he is sending them, a written sermon entitled What Is the Gospel of God and What does It Do in your Life? He keeps giving these rocks solid foundation stones – all have sinned and come short of the glory of God or there is none who seek Him, no, not one, all have turned astray or the wages of sin, death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord or there is therefore now, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The

reason Paul gives these foundation stones that we're to build our life upon is because he is doing distance, gospel, evangelism and discipleship to those who are listening to him at Rome and then sending it to us.

The Gospel of God is the foundation, the formation and the motivation of the Christian life. The Gospel is the foundation for it saves us. It is the formation for it disciples and develops us. It is the motivation that all of life would be lived to the glory of God and that is why Paul is laying these foundations stones.

Paul not only gives us foundation stones but he also gives us capstones and that is as he develops something, he brings us to glorious truths. Here's the capstone – having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). Another capstone – whoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13). Those are glorious statements, but he does something else and that's really germane and highly essential to understand where we are in Romans 6.

Commentator after commentator would tell you that Romans 6, 7, and 8 are the crucial foundational texts of the Christian life to grow in and for Christ. I think Paul has another stone and that's a keystone. When I take people to Israel, one of the places we spend a couple of hours is at Caesarea by the Sea where Paul spent two years there during his imprisonment. So much happened there. It became really the center of Christianity in the land of Israel in the first century and a burgeoning church was there so I love to go there.

There's a theater there and one of the entrances to the theater is a preserved first century arch. This arch looks like it has no support yet it is suspended over the entrance way and what keeps it in place now for 2,000 years since Herod the great built that, is a keystone. The keystone is bigger on one side, smaller on the other as it is wedged in and everything on both sides is connected to it. Paul keeps putting keystones whenever he writes. He gives it away with words that he uses over 200 times in Romans like the word 'therefore'. In other words, he is about to say something that's important, but you can't understand it without understanding what leads up to it. You have to know this in order to know that. Or he uses words like 'so,' 'for,' or 'since' which are keystone words that have a connecting tissue here.

Sometimes he connects the tissues by having given a capstone statement and then follows up with a keystone statement such as, 'What shall we say?' found in Romans 8:31. Then follows a rhetorical question whereby he gets to the issues. Paul is teaching gospel discipleship and that starts with know, be, then do. It's not what are the five things I need to do? No, it's what do you need to know? Sound doctrine leads to sound words that leads to sound life. Know, be and do. Paul never introduces in his epistles the imperatives without first giving the statements of fact. In the Greek, we call it the indicative.

Paul gives these statements of fact – here's who you are in Christ. Know it and be it. Now you're ready to do because you're doing does not put you in Christ. You're doing does not save you. You're doing is there for your Savior. So, Paul wants to make sure you know your Savior. He has given a number of these, and he is fully aware as he is unfolding the Gospel, that there are going to be people who twist Gospel truth to the demise of the baby Christians and the demise of the testimony of the Gospel in the world there.

There were two basic heresies and Paul was accused of these. One was legalism which is you're saved by your works of the law and without your works of the law, you can't be saved. Secondly, was the accompanying heresy of antinomianism, which said "if I'm saved by grace, then I can go do what I won't do. This bohemian Christianity can be all about me. In fact, I'm doing God a favor if I sin, because if I sin a lot, then He's got to come up with a lot more grace,

which gives Him glory. So I'll sin a lot to give Him grace." So, Paul deals with these things using his keystone statements to connect things as he works through them. In this study we are dealing with a third question, but Paul actually had started earlier.

He started in Romans 3:20 with the question, how can we be saved without the works of the law? I need to be circumcised. I need to go to the Passover. I need to do the three different tithes. I need to do the wave offerings. I need to do the atonement offerings. I need to do all of those things and if I don't do those things, I can't be saved because I'm saved by the works of the law. Why else would God have given us the law?

Then Paul tells why God gave the law. It has no power to save you and we have no power to take the law and save ourselves. God gave the law to show us we needed grace to be saved. He gave you the law to show you you're a sinner and your sin nature. Through the law we see we're impotent, helpless, and hopeless. God gave us the law to show us we need a Savior. We needed Someone to take our place. Paul answers the question that comes up in Romans 3:20, which says *[20] Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.* So, how can we be saved without the works of the law?

Paul answers the question in Romans 5:1, which says *[1] Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Here's how through Christ, who did the works necessary to save you. People will say, 'Pastor, do you believe we're saved by works?' I say, "Absolutely, but not yours or mine. My works present the problem, the issue to be dealt with. My righteousness is like filthy rags. No, we're saved through the works of Christ on our behalf, and we are saved by the work of Christ who sends the Holy Spirit to work on us, in us and through us." We're saved by grace, alone through faith, alone in Christ alone. Thus, Paul comes to a capstone verse in Romans 5:1 and brings us to Christ. We have peace with God, access to God, we suffer for God, we rejoice in God, and we are sealed by the Spirit of God.

Paul gives another capstone verse in Romans 5:20 which says *[20] Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.* Paul knows those who read this and say 'I can't out sin God's grace so why don't I make a lifestyle of sin? That'll cause God to give abounding grace.' Now, the rationale there is absurd obviously, but Paul now begins to answer in Romans 6:1-2 which says *[1] What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? [2] By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?*

To answer this Paul uses baptism. What is the theology of baptism? It is that Christ has poured out His blood upon us, His Spirit upon us and Christ has sprinkled us clean by His blood because of His redeeming work on the cross. Therefore, we are in union with Christ. You're no longer united to Adam in sin's death and sin's indictment. You are now united to the second Adam, Christ. You bear His name. You were baptized in the name of Christ which means when He died, you died and when He was raised you were raised. When He died to sin you died to sin in Him, when He was raised into newness of life before God, then you were raised into newness of life before God. The answer is how can we who died to sin still live in it? We know we still have sin living in us, but we no longer live in its dominion. We are no longer under its reign. We are no longer in its power.

Then Paul gives another capstone verse in Romans 6:14 which says *[14] For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.* I love the language Paul uses for it's worship language and warrior language. We now with a new heart and a new

record present our bodies as statements of love as we live in newness of life unto to God. We live a life of worship. [31] *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God* (I Corinthians 10:31). We live at war against sin. We are presenting our hands, our arms, our feet, our brain, our mouth, our tongue – the members of our body as instruments unto God. ‘Present arms’ is a military term that now I by God's grace at war with the sin in my life that still remains. I don't want sin to live in me. I want to put it to death. Why? I want to worship God by killing sin and following Jesus. Therefore, the members of my body, instead of being given over to sin, would be given over to righteousness.

When Paul says ‘We're not under law, but under grace’ he anticipates another question. Romans 6:15-16 says [15] *What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! (God forbid!)* [16] *Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?*

Now he is saying do you not know that your life reveals who your master is? Your life reveals whom you are serving. If you're presenting the members of your body to sin, then what you are declaring is that sin is master over you. If you are presenting the members of your body to righteousness, then you are presenting yourselves to God out of love to God and that reveals that the Lord is the Lord of your life. It doesn't save you. It declares your relationship with your Savior. Will you be perfect? No, and that's why we confess our sins because He has forgiven us, but we don't sign peace treaties with sin. We don't embrace sin as a lifestyle that grace may abound and we don't embrace or sign peace treaties with any sin because we're not under the law, but under grace. That's what Paul is telling us here.

There are amazing patterns that are here. When Paul wants to handle these questions, how does he do it? We saw in Romans 6:1-14 that he had three responses – an emotional response, a theological or instructional response and then a directional response. He spoke from the heart to the mind and the will, but he didn't speak to the will until he spoke to the mind because the pathway to the heart for the work of saving grace is through the mind. Paul shows us that when we know the truth, you're emotionally invested. So when Paul hears, ‘Are we to continue in sin, that grace may increase’ his emotional response is ‘God forbid!’ Then he gives an instruction of sound doctrine, a theological response, by saying “I'll tell you what you need to know. Do you not know that you're in Christ, in Christ is in you? And when He died for your sin, He died to sin, and you died to sin with Him. When He was raised, you were raised with Him to the praise of God in worship and that we are at warfare with sin, until He brings you home in your perfection and perfects you in eternity.” Then he speaks to that of how to present the members of your body, not to be saved, but to your Savior.

Now Paul asks another rhetorical question in Romans 6:15 – are we to sin, because we are not under law but under grace? He gives the same profile, same protocol in his responses – emotional, instructional and then directional. His emotional response is ‘God forbid!’ Then Paul moves to discipleship as he gives his instructional response – do you not know? (Romans 6:16). I need to take you all the way back into the first century where slavery was the culture. The historians tell us that over 60% of the people in the Roman Empire were in some form of slavery. We see in the Bible how it deals with slavery. On the one hand, what we have had in this country in the past, it absolutely condemns and forbids chattel slavery. The Bible declares that as man stealing and it is not to be found among us, but the Bible does make something available that is very interesting. That is something that became known in our culture as indentured servitude, an economic form of slavery, where I owe somebody something and I give myself to

them, but it was limited in the Old Testament to seven years. When the seven years were up, you were freed with everything that you had accrued during that seven years and you were to be set free. This is all described in Exodus 21.

In the indentured servitude of the Old Testament, if the one who had put themselves as a slave or servant to a master for an economic servitude and the seven years had ended and they were set free, the servant or the slave could decide because of the benevolence and kindness of my master to continue as a servant or slave out of love to his master. Exodus 21 describes how they do that. Basically, they would go to the master and say, "Out of the love you've expressed to me and my love to you, I desire to continue to be a bond servant, a slave to you." In those seven years, they now had developed a relationship that as they were emancipated out of love to the master, they wanted to continue to be his slave, a *doulas* – bond servant. That person would go to a door post and the master would take them to the door post and they would place their ear against the door post and the master would take an awl, and drive a hole through the lobe of the ear. Then they would normally wear a ring in it.

I had this discussion with some teenagers a number of years ago. It went something like this. "Pastor, what do you think about ear piercing?" "It depends on why you're piercing." They said "Really?" I said "I have had a piercing. You see, Jesus came and set me free. I'm now His slave because He made me His son out of His love to me I now out of love to Him want to follow Him. He's not only my Savior and set me free. I now out of love, desire to follow Him." This is what Paul is describing here in this slave language. He's talking about this free love driven slavery to the One who, by love redeemed you through His grace.

Let's continue in the passage for here is your key verse, a capstone verse. Romans 6:17-19 says [17] ***But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, [18] and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. [19] I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.***

My life is not under the law. My life has a new heart. In the blessing of the New Covenant we have a new heart that has the Law of God written on it. Now I have His law to use lawfully. It can't save me and I can't save myself with it, but now that I have a new record, a new heart and a new life and that new life, while imperfect, is intentional and it is intentionally there to follow Christ, Master, Lord and Savior from the heart. So, from the heart we are there to follow Him and this is my life. I'm not called to manufacture sermons. I am called to preach the Word so that you have the sound doctrine for the sound life, for sound words. This is why we have to disciple and have a disciple maker in your life. That's why you have someone teach in the Sunday school community. That's why you get in the Word every day. I want my life from my new heart to be guided by sound doctrine. Know, be and then do. I want it to be guided so that I can follow the One who set me free and I'm His, every member of my body. I do this because I love my Savior, who, by His love, has set me free to rise up.

Notice starting in Romans 6:18 regeneration where we have been set free. I have been born again. I have a new heart. I have been set free from sin and its dominion. I still have it in my life but it doesn't have my life. It's not my life. We see worship and warrior language again in Romans 6:17-19. We see a death spiral under the dominion of sin in verse 19 and as you are slaves to righteousness it is leading you to a set apart life for Jesus – leading you to sanctification. That's the glorious truth of God's Word.

There's a wonderful moment when I take people to Israel and I haven't been able to do it now for 18 years. There's a place called Shechem. It's where Genesis 12 and Joshua 8 come together. There are two mountains and Shechem is a city in the valley between those two mountains. In Genesis 12 Shechem is where Abraham came being surrounded by Canaanites and six nations and God stopped him and initiated covenant telling him "I'm going to give you a seed. This is your land. I'm going to give it to you. This is going to be your home. I'm going to make you a nation." God formalizes it in Genesis 15 and He initiated in Genesis 12. Abraham goes over and lives between Bethel and Ai.

Half a century later, after they've been taken into Egypt, matured, multiplied and mobilized, they now come out to dispel the Canaanite nations. Once they take Jericho, their next step is between Ai and Bethel – Shechem. Then Abraham is instructed to build an altar on Mount Ebal, write the Law on uncut stones and build the altar with uncut stones. From Mount Ebal Abraham was to announce the curses of the Law to God's people in Shechem in the valley as they listen and then do their sacrifices on the altar. Then he was to read the blessings of the Law from Mount Gerizim. The altar doesn't go on Mount Gerizim for the altar goes on Mount Ebal where a substitutionary sacrifice has been placed to take the curses of the law, and were no longer under them. Now, the law is the declaration of God's glory, and I'm not under it for now I have it written on my heart and I love it.

The Law is not there to save me because I'm not under it. I'm under grace and the sacrifice of Christ. What a glorious moment. Praise God! Our sacrifice is not Mount Ebal with lambs and goats. We have a Savior that went to Mount Calvary and the Bible says 'Cursed is he who hangs upon the tree' (Galatians 3:13). Christ took the curses of the law there on the cross and now from Mount Zion, where He brings us, He declares the blessings of grace by Him who has redeemed us from the curses of the law, the power of sin, the penalty of sin, and assured us perfections in glory, even as He sanctifies us on the way to glory. So, are we to sin? No, we are to follow Christ. When we sin, not if, we don't present a permission slip. We confess and He forgives and cleanses us from all unrighteousness that we might rise and keep following Him by His grace.

Here is the takeaway. Realize our salvation is not achieved for Christ achieves our salvation. Having said that our Sonship salvation by grace in Christ is revealed by our slaveship sanctification of love to Christ. He first loved us. We're sons of God and now He owns us. Out of love to Him we rise up to follow Him into glory. Know your sonship, be sons of God, now what do you do as sons? You go to your Savior and say to Him, who first loved you, "I love you Jesus, I'm coming to the doorpost. I've been set free by You out of Your love." Now I come to the doorpost and Jesus, by the Spirit of God, with the Word of God drives the awl into our ear, not our nose. He doesn't lead us around by the nose, but in our ear we hear His voice.

When I speak, I can't do this, but I thank God that He, from time to time, visits the voice of a preacher or a teacher or a discipler who is teaching the Word of God and in the midst of that voice, they, by faith, hearing Christ, rise up and call upon the Lord as Jesus, voice speaks. It's like at Bethany where we who are in the dungeon of sin, in the chains of sin, in the tomb of sin, we hear His voice just as Lazarus did. Jesus said "Lazarus come forth?" And he comes forth. When Jesus speaks through His Word, men and women rise up, chains fall off, and they come out of tombs to follow Jesus with all of their heart and their life for that voice brings them forth. We hear His voice and we follow Him.

My ears, by God's grace, have been pierced. I now can hear Him, and I now can follow Him. Continue to sin? No! God, help me kill sin and follow Jesus. Help me help You present

ourselves to Him. Rise up for your chains have fallen off. Hear His voice and follow Him and so reveal to the world that we follow Him whom we love because He first loved us. Let's pray.

Prayer:

God, thank You so much that we get the opportunity to demonstrate to the world our love to Christ through obedience. Please, Jesus, speak. May Your voice call men and women from the tomb of sin, from the chains of sin, and set them free, that they might come forth to follow thee. For those here who have been born again and have a new heart and a new record, may we embrace the opportunity to declare to the world we follow Jesus with an ear to hear His voice in His Word. May we from the heart embrace that sound doctrine, that standard of teaching, so that we know, to be and to do all for Him, in Jesus' Name, Amen.